Musical Recall: Postmemory and the Punjabi Diaspora

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In British author Meera Syal's autobiographical novel *Anita and Me*, the narrative of a Punjabi girl growing up in an English village is interrupted at one point by memories of the Partition of India. One evening, the protagonist, Meena, overhears a musical soirée arranged by her parents and their friends turning into a heated emotional discussion:

> It was my Uncle Bhatnagar shouting. . . . "But it was a damn massacre!" he was spluttering, and then he talked in Punjabi of which I recognised a few words, "Family . . . money . . . death" and then, "They talk about their world wars . . . We lost a million people! And who thought up Partition? These 'gores' [white people], that's who!" Then everyone launched in, the whispers squeezed through the gap in the door and I could make out familiar voices saying such terrible and alien things.
>
> "My mother and I, the Hindus marched us through the streets . . . our heads uncovered . . ." That must have been Auntie Mumtaz, one of our few Muslim friends. "They wanted to do such things to us . . ." . . . there was a long pause, I thought I heard someone sniff. "All the time we were walking, mama and I, papa was lying dead, his head cut from his body. They found it later lying in the fallen jasmine blooms . . ."
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> "We all have these stories, bhainji [sister]," Uncle Bhatnagar again, addressing her as sister. "What was happening to you was also happening to us. None of us could stop it, Mad people everywhere." There was a murmur of consensus, subdued, fearful maybe because of all the old wounds being reopened. "We were on the wrong side of the border also when the news came, none of us knew

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> until that moment if we would be going or staying. My whole family, we walked from Syalcote across the border . . . We maybe passed your family going the other way. The bodies piled high . . . the trains pulling into stations full of dead families. . . . Hai Ram. What we have seen. . . ." (Syal 73)

Sisters lost to mobs, Sikhs shearing their uncut hair in trains, men's heads chopped off as yanked-down trousers yielded evidence of circumcision—overhearing these stories, Meena realises that the past for her parents was no sentimental journey, but "a murky bottomless pool full of monsters . . . a deceptively still surface and a deadly undercurrent" (Syal 75).

Two levels of memorial recall operate here: the elders remembering what had happened, and the adult author remembering them remembering. This memory of a memory lurks darkly beneath the comedic vision of a diasporic subjectivity developing out of the two strands of Meena's childhood: life outside the home, where she roams Tollington with her white friends, and life inside the home, site of a domestic and hospitable Punjabi culture. How do we explain this undigested fragment, extraneous to the narrative task of reconciling these strands? Holocaust scholar Marianne Hirsch's concept of "postmemory" provides a clue:

> postmemory characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are displaced by the stories of the previous generation, shaped by traumatic events that they can neither understand nor create . . . [It is] a space of remembrance, more broadly available through cultural and public, and not merely individual and personal, acts of remembrance, identification and projection. (Hirsch 8)

Within Syal's narrative, however, postmemory belongs to neither the public nor the personal sphere, but to an alternative community space that is somewhere in between: a reconstituted Punjabiness that exists behind closed suburban doors. To understand this Punjabi postmemory taking shape in Britain, out of the very debris of the Partition of 1947, we have to develop conceptual grids around factors different from Hirsch's distinctions between cultural and public on the

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one hand, and individual and personal on the other. From the passage cited above, we can extract some of these factors: music, bilingualism, Partition, fratricide, the somatics of religious identity, rape. Their mutual interaction—performed during moments such as that described by Syal—creates an affective matrix that revisits, from a specifically Punjabi diasporic perspective, connections between cultural trauma, collective memory, and the therapeutic powers of narrative now taken as almost axiomatic by Western scholars.

Speaking of the Carribean experience, Stuart Hall observes that diasporic subjectivity is inevitably marked by "a certain imaginary plenitude, recreating the endless desire to return to 'lost origins,' to be one again with the mother, to go back to the beginning" (Hall 32). If this is true, how is this imaginative and emotional investment in the idea of a 'motherland' impacted by that 'motherland' having been territorially divided, demographically reorganised, and scarred by extreme violence between religiously polarised groups? What impact do political configurations 'back home' have on the labels of belonging adopted by first and subsequent generations of diasporic subjects? An answer may be found in the category of 'neo-ethnic postmemory.' My use of the qualifier 'neo' is consciously weighted against the opinion that "the shattered mirror of Punjabi consciousness reflects tiny images, which refuse to coalesce into a portrait" (Grewal 52). From the evidence of memory-work produced by contemporary British Asian artists, musicians and writers, it is evident that, on the contrary, the "shattered mirror" *can* be reassembled at least for some Punjabis living in diaspora; and in ways that remain difficult, in fact, for Punjabis who continue to live within South Asia.

In this article, I first explicate this point by considering the broad contours of the Partition of India and its manifestations in the Punjab as "cultural trauma," defined as "a dramatic loss of identity and meaning, a tear in the social fabric, affecting a group of people that has achieved some degree of cohesion" (Eyerman 2). This perspective of cultural trauma further enables us to observe that the pressures of the decolonised nation state have rendered impossible any public mourning for the cultural losses occasioned by Partition. I next discuss how this work of mourning is executed in the diasporic space, and how transnational flows of cultural capital bring these works of memorialisation back to South Asia. I take my cues mostly from contemporary music created and enjoyed by Punjabis in South Asia and the diaspora: not only Bhangra music, which is most immediately identified as

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'Punjabi,' but also other forms such as Qawwali and Ghazal, which, while not *per se* tied to 'Punjabiness,' gain that sense when embedded within specific contexts.

It must be emphasised at the outset that my analysis pertains to particular examples of these musical forms, and to specific artists/intellectuals using those forms within the Punjabi diaspora. Ethnographic or quantitative/qualitative analyses based on 'actual responses' of diasporic communities of listeners lie outside the article's remit. Any references made to these communities are based on my own observations of daily life both in the UK and in India, and noted as such. Rather, the methodology I employ derives from cultural and literary criticism, and is born out of the interplay between (in the words of Edward Said) the world, the text and the critic. I read music as text in order to elaborate upon that which Meera Syal hints at: music's affective power to wrench out of the ordinary and the quotidian, the very wellsprings of loss. Following the title of a book largely on memorialising the Holocaust, "cultural recall," I call this process 'musical recall' (Bal, et al.). At the same time, the concept of 'musical recall' is based on my understanding of music as oral/aural, non-narrative text. This understanding in turn suggests that music offers certain therapeutic possibilities for traumatised subjects that go beyond those offered by narrative, or the telling and reading of stories.

I

The freedom struggle in colonial India created two new nations as the British departed in August 1947. Based on the 'Two-Nation Theory,' that Hindus and Muslims comprised not one nation but separate entities with opposing interests, the Muslim League demanded the partition of the Subcontinent into a Muslim Pakistan and a Hindu India (Jalal). The Muslim majority regions of Punjab and Bengal were divided: western Punjab and eastern Bengal became West and East Pakistan, with India sandwiched in the middle (in 1971, East Pakistan seceded from Pakistan, creating a third nation, Bangladesh). This entailed a massive and violent transfer of population as Sikhs and Hindus from regions that were now in Pakistan moved into India, and Muslims moved in the opposite direction. A million people were left dead and at least seventy-five thousand women raped and abandoned; around twelve million people were displaced, countless homes abandoned or destroyed, properties, families and cultures divided as new national borders were drawn over existing ethnolinguistic identities,

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most obviously Bengali and Punjabi (Butalia; Bhasin and Menon).

The Partition of India exemplifies a large-scale traumatic event whose psychological and collective repercussions persist to this day, stamping identity politics between and within South Asian nations and their various diasporas (Kaul). The wound that was then inflicted on the body of the individual was also a wound inflicted on the body collective, most obviously through the rape, mutilation and abduction of women. The connection of violence with identity was heightened by the somatic markers of religious belonging, such as circumcision for Muslim men and uncut hair for their Sikh counterparts, which rendered men as well as women vulnerable to identification and subsequent assault by the 'Other.' Physical dislocation combined with violence to make not just the body, but also the body's place in the world, a site of personal and cultural trauma:

> consequent to this violence in which the most interior aspects of life were the most intruded upon—fleeing to another alien space led to a division of the self and the world according to a logic that made the self radically fugitive and the world radically fragmented. (Das 65)

This fragmented and fugitive post-Partition reality was shared by people from territorially divided regions, such as the Punjab and Bengal, as well as from regions such as Sindh, Uttar Pradesh and Hyderabad (South India) that experienced population transfer without territorial division. Nevertheless, the experience of the Punjab was particularly horrifying for the sheer scale and intensity of the violence. Images from the Punjab Partition have in fact entered the collective memory of the Indian nation as metonymic of the madness of that time: never-ending processions of people crossing the new borders in both directions; trainloads of fleeing passengers slaughtered before reaching their destination, whether Lahore in Pakistan or Amritsar in India; women being forced by their men to imbibe poison or jump into wells in preference to dishonour at the hands of the 'Other.' In further divergence from, say, the Partition of Bengal (Chatterji), an almost complete transfer of population accompanied the violence, making Indian Punjab today as nearly devoid of Muslims as Pakistani Punjab is of Hindus and Sikhs.

This near-instantaneous and violent demographic reordering, along with the concomitant fracturing of identities, destruction of sacred

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geographies, and necessities of rehabilitation, inevitably impacted the restructuring of Punjabi collective memory in the new nation states of India and Pakistan. Thanks to the migratory patterns of the Punjabi people, a not inconsiderable part of this restructuring has also taken place in what has been called the 'third Punjab' of the diaspora (Singh and Thandi ix). From the nineteenth century onwards, the British Empire's transnational flows of labour and capital had sent Punjabis, especially Sikhs, to Canada, East Africa, California, the UK, South-East Asia, and even New Zealand, making migration and entrepreneurship intrinsic aspects of Punjabi self-perception (Helweg; Barrier and Dusenbery; Singh and Thandi). During and after Partition, this pattern of outward movement offered Punjabis of all religious backgrounds the already established 'third Punjab' as a space of rehabilitation and reconstruction alternative to the new nations of Pakistan and India.

It is possible to view the upheavals of Partition as simply one more link in the long chain of political and economic exigencies that have shaped the worldwide Punjabi diaspora, of which a very visible part is its Sikh component. As two Punjab specialists comment,

> since the late 1940s, Sikh migration has once again become a significant world-wide phenomenon. . . . In particular the social dislocation brought about by partition was a leading push factor in the immediate post-independence era. (Barrier and Dusenbery 7)

Yet such casual references to Partition ignore its foundational, albeit often subtextually embedded, position in the memory-work of Punjabi artists and intellectuals in both South Asia and the diaspora. Taking cognisance of that evidence, I suggest that the sudden change in the territorial integrity and demographic composition of the Punjab, to the accompaniment of unimaginable levels of looting, murder, and rape are all factors that make the post-Partition diaspora function very differently within Punjabi collective memory from the remembrance of earlier migrations.

A shattered and divided motherland cannot provide the imaginative and emotional bulwark that the diasporic subjectivity often seeks as protective sheath. Punjabi literature of the Partition, whether written in English, Hindi, Urdu or Punjabi, certainly communicates this sense of a permanently altered homeland left behind in the wake of fratricide. Let us consider the eminent author Krishna Sobti's nostalgic recreation

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of life in a pre-Partition Punjabi village in her novel, *Zindaginama* (*Life-Chronicle*). Written in Hindi permeated with an earthy colloquial Punjabi flavour and punctuated with Persian, Urdu and Punjabi lyrics of Sufi saints and poets from the Punjab such as Bulleh Shah, the language of *Zindaginama* seeks to recuperate cultural loss through the (re)creation of an idealised, syncretistic idiom, which is then deployed in the recollection of equally syncretistic 'folk activities,' such as spinning, cotton carding, weaving and harvest rituals.

The extended prologue to *Zindaginama* provides a lyric eulogy to the Punjab itself through detailed references to key aspects of its folk culture, such as the Bhangra dance and its accompanying music. Evoking the land as mother, Sobti laments that "today from its milk-heavy breasts drips not milk but blood." The latter half of the eulogy speaks of flight, of leaving behind the "water of waters, the Punjab of five waters," and of bidding farewell to the memory of one's ancestors and the earth of childhood play (14-15). For Sobti, as for many other writers, flight from the ancestral home is equated with flight from aspects of Punjabi culture that are lost forever after Partition. From this perspective, Partition seems to have rendered every Punjabi diasporic, regardless of which of the 'three Punjabs' offered post-Partition domicile. Nevertheless, we should not ignore the specific political configurations in India, Pakistan and the diaspora proper that have impacted in very different ways the subjectivities of their respective Punjabi populations.

For Punjabis in India and Pakistan, continued territorial contact with and proximity to the Punjab, albeit a permanently altered one, was offset by nationalist agendas of both countries that required the subordination of regional identities. In post-Partition India, secularism and federalism were the two demands that the nation made on the loyalties of the citizen; in Pakistan, the Urdu language and Islamic identity exercised parallel hegemonies. In fact, the military and political dominance of people of Punjabi ethnicity within the Pakistani public sphere co-exists in some tension with the universal promotion of Urdu as the language of statecraft and high culture. In both India and Pakistan, in other words, it has been difficult to reclaim co-ordinates of collective identity—whether ethnic or religious—other than those delineated by the national master-narrative. This difficulty meant that one could only commemorate that which was lost within a private circle of communitarian belonging. In India, at least, it would seem that Punjabi subjectivity has been stamped indelibly by the need to mourn

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cultural loss, as well as by the simultaneous impossibility of expressing longing or sorrow for pre-Partition Punjabiness within national public culture. Although this partitioning of subjectivity into private and public domains is a defining feature of any minority identity in South Asia (Kabir, "Subjectivities"), I would like to isolate here its specifically Punjabi manifestations within India.

Foremost among these is a rather peculiar irony: while it has been difficult to mourn directly within India for the loss of pre-Partition Punjab, Punjabi culture has been indirectly valorised through the circulation of television serials about post-Partition rehabilitation—most notably the early television serials of the 1980s, *Hum Log* (*We People*) and *Buniyaad* (*Foundations*)—as well as novels about the Punjab Partition, and, more crucially for the popular cultural domain, through Punjabi wedding rituals and Punjabi clothing that have spread across India primarily through 'Bollywood' films. These discourses have projected a certain expressive Punjabi aesthetic as a representative, indeed seductive aspect of Indian culture as a whole. This aesthetic, that one writer and architect has termed "Punjabi Baroque" (Bhatia), has been most recently given affectionately ironic treatment and global dissemination through 'crossover' films such as *Monsoon Wedding* (Mira Nair, 2001) and *Bend it Like Beckham* (Gurinder Chadha, 2002).

The phenomenal popularity of these films in both India and 'the West' illustrates, furthermore, how transnational cultural flows between 'home' and diaspora are a shaping influence on the public-private divide in Punjabi subjectivity and therefore on Punjabi (post)memory. As diasporic Punjabi women, Nair and Chadha knowingly target the family, that space where ideology is most keenly undercut by emotional ties and kinship bonds (Brah 67-83). Although the traditional practices of the 'Asian family' have come under liberal and feminist scrutiny in both Britain and India, such counter-hegemonic voices in India cannot afford the luxuries of affect and emotion in their daily battles against the increasingly visible and militant relationship between patriarchy, religious revivalism and belligerent nationalism. In contrast, liberal anxieties regarding multiculturalism in the West offers the diasporic subject a space of negotiation (Singh). It becomes possible then to recuperate from the contested site of the 'Asian family' a celebration and assertion of Punjabiness that has shrunk to the home, but which, through film—and, as we shall see, music—reaches India, Pakistan, and the world at large.

Such diasporic articulations of neo-ethnic postmemory must be

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viewed alongside the emergence of Sikh separatism in India during the 1980's through the interaction of Pakistani, Indian and diasporic Punjab (Chadda). I raise here this complex issue simply to suggest that the difficulties of mourning the Punjab Partition in India and in Pakistan and the energies and different freedoms of the diaspora resulted in what may be seen as an explosive "return of the repressed," or the demand for Khalistan—a Sikh homeland carved out of Indian Punjab, supported materially by diasporic Sikhs and the Pakistani State, whose structures, as we noted above, are dominated by Punjabi Muslims. Common wisdom attributes the crushing of that movement to the ruthless counter-terrorist measures of the Indian State. I would look also to the channels of artistic and cultural expression, increasingly carved out of Punjabi diasporic-domestic interactions since the 1990s, and offering a non-violent, cosmopolitan alternative to radical separatist politics.

II

In this circulation of Punjabi cultural capital, a crucial role has been played by different genres of music that are associated with Punjabi culture both in South Asia and the diaspora. The most obvious such genre is Bhangra, described by one commentator as

> Punjabi folk and western pop shoved into the blender at high speed . . . at least as quintessentially 'British' as it is 'Asian,' although [its] influence stretches beyond the UK to Canada and the USA, and of course the music has been re-exported back to South Asia. (Huq 61, 63)

The assertion of an urban diasporic Punjabi youth identity enabled affiliations beyond racial and intra-South Asian ethnic cleavages, but, equally, contestations through alternative British Asian sounds. More self-conscious developments in Punjabi-British dance music, termed 'post-Bhangra' by critics (Sanjay Sharma; Huq) have subsequently emerged. 'Post-Bhangra' has complicated the initial "affirmative moment in the formation of an Asian identity discourse in the early 1980s," during which Bhangra first opened up "a site for Asian youth culture acquiring a sense of identity and visibility in the public domain, and negotiating an ambivalent positionality in relation to a culturally hostile and exclusionary British nation" (Sanjay Sharma 39).

The racial politics and youth cultures articulated by Bhangra and 'post-Bhangra' have made these musical genres amenable to aca-

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demic commentators interested in those wider themes, and especially in the insertion of those politics within the sanitising domains of academia (Sharma, et al.; Dudrah). The diasporic affiliations with the Punjab as homeland displayed by British Bhangra lyrics has been noted by Dudrah. I would like to develop the implications of this comment by probing the connections between diasporic Punjabi identity as formulated through trauma, and the healing capacities of Bhangra and post-Bhangra. In attempting to extract here this particular signification from these musics, I shall draw equally on other genres of South Asian music that circulate among diverse Punjabi audiences, but whose significance seems not to have been much acknowledged: the Punjabi version of Qawwali, or North Indian sufi music (Qureshi); and the Ghazal (romantic lyric), sung in Urdu, and patronized by groups across historic North India, including Punjabis (Manuel; Banerji). While Ghazal has long enjoyed popularity through South Asia and its diasporas—the soirée described by Syal within the opening citation of this article is, in fact, a Ghazal soirée—the globalisation of Qawwali owes single-handedly to the Pakistani qawwal Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, who was, incidentally, Punjabi (Ashwani Sharma 24-25). It is not surprising, therefore, that the soundtracks of both *Monsoon Wedding* and *Bend it Like Beckham* tap into the specific affects of all these genres, weaving thereby a matrix of Punjabiness through nostalgia, homage and hope.

"Wafadar hai mitti Punjabwali/wafadar hai khoon punjabiyan da [loyal is the soil of the Punjab, loyal the blood of the Punjabi]"—this statement opens a Bhangra track by Hans Raj Hans, remixed by British Asian Punjabi DJ Bally Sagoo, and included in *Bend it Like Beckham*. Entitled "Punjabiyan di Shaan" ("Pride of the Punjabis"). It utilizes an eight-beat rhythm cycle prevalent in Indian folk music, and played on the traditional folk drum of the Punjab, the dhol (known as dholki or dholak elsewhere in northern India); signature melodic strings; strong Punjabi inflections; and traditional antiphonal punctuations ('hoi,' 'aha,' 'balle balle'). Simultaneously, electronic percussions and keyboards reproduce a spectrum of dance sounds—techno, house, drum 'n' bass and reggae. Sounds and rhythms of globalisation and Bhangra—the hybrid mix of "drum 'n' dhol" (Dudrah)—thus combine to evoke the mutual loyalty of Punjab's soil and Punjab's children. In *Monsoon Wedding*'s "Aaja Nacch Le" ("Come, Let's Dance") written by Bally Sagoo and also featuring Hans Raj Hans, similarly, techno and house sounds transform a traditional Bhangra

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call to dance into a flamboyant assembling of diasporic Punjabi youth.

The narrative frame into which "Aaja Nacch Le" is embedded—a Punjabi Hindu wedding in Delhi—as well as its dissemination from "Brit-Asia" to "Transl-Asia" (Kaur and Kalra 405, punning on Trans-Asia and Translation [translatia, translasia]) through the cinematic medium—foreground the transnational trajectories of Punjabiness that diasporic postmemory facilitates. The celebratory mood of Bhangra is offset in *Monsoon Wedding* by songs by the Pakistani artists—Nusrat Fateh Ali and veteran Ghazal singer Farida Khanum—which evoke sorrow, estrangement and longing. Moreover, the theme song, a traditional Punjabi lyric celebrating the monsoons, is sung by the Indian Sikh Sukhwinder Singh, who has consistently recuperated within mainstream Bollywood music the Punjabi Muslim spirituality associated with Nusrat Fateh Ali's Qawwali (Kabir "Allegories"). The cut-and-mix aesthetic of diasporic art magnifies other affects discernible in Punjabi music shops across the three Punjabs. This author has observed cassettes of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Sikh religious hymns (shabads), and post-Bhangra remixes digitally mastered in Birmingham, selling cheek-by-jowl in small music shops hugging the highways of Indian Punjab; and CDs of the same genres selling in large and glitzy outlets in Manchester's "Curry Mile." In the latter case, it is often near impossible to detect, *prima facie*, the "original nationality" and religion of the shop owners beyond the obvious fact of their Punjabi origin.

In *Monsoon Wedding*, this pan-Punjabi cut-and-mix, facilitated further by the soundtrack format, is audaciously located within a narrative set in and concerned with India, precisely where, as I noted earlier, remembering Punjabiness has been complicated by the demands of nationalism. The soundtrack that recalls, like the music shops described above, the composite culture of pre-Partition Punjab thus cuts against the narrative enactment of Punjabi Hindu culture in contemporary Delhi. Ostensibly, the film has nothing to do with Sikh and Muslim cultures of the Punjab; affectively, those are the cultural and historical layers dredged up through musical recall. The soundtrack of *Monsoon Wedding* demonstrates how music offers modes of remembering and working through cultural trauma that are less contentious than narratives of Punjabiness, and, in fact, work against them. However celebratory, such narratives compulsively return to the moment of violence and rupture that overwrites "language as a precondition for experiencing history" (Van Alphen 42). Whose Punjab do we then talk about? Sikh, Hindu or Muslim? Pakistani, Indian, or

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diasporic? The narrative frames that we erect to repair a world ruptured by trauma imply perspective, closure, rationalization. Music heeds no such tyrannies: its affect stems not from narrative or descriptive logic, but "structures of feeling" that transmit the somatics of memory and belonging across generations.

The transformation of traumatic memory into musical postmemory suggests that memory can become "a repository of the sublime" (Van Alphen 195) only when that which is remembered is not embedded within an overt narrative. The spatial and conceptual possibilities of diaspora encourage this freeing from story. This point is especially pertinent for groups marginalized by the nation state and its master narratives, and for the diasporic artist who wishes to acknowledge 'home' without necessarily participating in the displays of nationalism that 'home' now generates. After all, it must not be forgotten that diaspora has its traditional and radical-nativist aspects, which are often predicated on residual and reactivated caste/class positionalities and subjectivities. Nevertheless, we can claim that neo-ethnic postmemory has a certain subversive potential that resides in its ability to undo territorial, religious and other competitive nationalisms. To be 'Punjabi,' rather than 'Indian' or 'Pakistani,' 'Hindu,' 'Muslim,' or 'Sikh,' can, after all, facilitate cross-border mourning with other Punjabis that is near-impossible within South Asia itself.

This potential is most powerfully concentrated in music, which through its oral circulation bypasses another feature of narrative today—its transmission through the written word. This difference between music—especially South Asian music, that, unlike Western music, is not tied to the script of the musical score—and the written word is especially crucial in the Punjabi context. Punjabi's strong associations with Sikhism in India means that it is written there in the Gurmukhi, or Sikh religious script, that resembles Devanagari, the script in which Hindi is written. Likewise, Punjabi's assimilation into the Pakistani State's Islamicisation programme has been encouraged by its being written there in the Shahmukhi (Persian) script. This division of script parallels the mutual illegibility of Urdu and Hindi. Thus post-Partition Punjabis in the different Punjabs cannot read each other's Punjabi cultural productions. Nevertheless, they can understand Punjabi when they hear music with Punjabi lyrics, or recognise the Punjabi accent with which an Urdu ghazal or Persian qawwali is enunciated.

Such Punjabi music thereby embodies a transnational postmemory. Such transnationality also opens the diasporic artist to a wider

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palette of creative influences, idioms and alignments, many of which range far from 'home.' This range reflects, of course, the self-conscious agenda of post-Bhangra, with its "more specific and intentional fusions of bhangra beats and South Asian instrumentations with other contemporary (dance) genres" (Sanjay Sharma 33).

> From the 1947 Partition to the 60s migration of our parents, we are the product of mass movement—this is the story of Migration: Departure, Arrival, Adaptation, Fusion. From the anguish, turmoil and pain of our parents' history comes the responsibility to build our own dreams.

These declarations on the sleeve notes of Nitin Sawhney's 1995 album, *Migration*, spell out the Punjabi diasporic artist's manifesto. A British Asian who has broken out of the 'bhangra ghetto' and is marketed as a jazz funk artist, Sawhney traces a musical trajectory of migration and remembrance that faces outward even while constantly looking back. His music echoes what Hall has described as the dialogic relationship between two vectors that defines diasporic identity: "the vector of similarity and continuity; and the vector of difference and rupture," where, "[if] one gives . . . continuity with the past, the second reminds us that what we share is precisely the experience of a profound discontinuity" (Hall 24).

The first and eponymous track of *Migration* expresses precisely this sense of continuity-in-discontinuity. Perfectly structured, its journey starts in the east—with tropical birdcall, tabla and dhol (South Asian percussion instruments, the latter bearing specifically Punjabi connotations), snake-charming bagpipe-flute or been, and a classical vocal refrain—but, as the sleeve notes describe, "the percussion stacks up gradually, building up a nice bustling groove." At midpoint, a confident jazz funk sound takes over, although one can still hear an eight-beat Indian rhythm cycle underneath; and in the final third of the track, the vocals return. This transformation through movement away from the Punjab reappears in the album's final track, "Awareness," a minute-long coda that Sawhney describes as "the end of our parents' journey and the beginning of our aspirations." These two pieces bracket six musical vignettes that are neither conclusively Indian, nor decisively 'Western,' and, ostensibly, hardly Punjabi, except for the sixth and seventh tracks, entitled "Punjabi" and "Heer Ranjha" respectively.

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"Punjabi" conveys a concentrated essence of Punjabiness through minimalist yet instantly recognisable features of Bhangra: two antiphonal calls, 'hoi' and 'punjabiyan,' punctuating a keyboard rendering of a Bhangra melodic sequence to the eight-beat cycle. A tribute to the past and its postmemorial reconstruction by Bhangra artists in the UK, "Punjabi" is the emotional and musical core of the structure already demarcated by "Migration" and "Awareness." This joyous piece is balanced by the plaintive "Heer Ranjha," Sawhney's interpretation of eighteenth-century Punjabi poet Waris Shah's epic of unrequited love. Heer's refrain in this track, "call me, Ranjha, for we are one," embodies—in form and content—music's potential for healing, at least momentarily, the fissures of the Punjab. As Sobti says of the common Punjabi lyric heritage:

> Nanak, Baba Farid, Amir Khusro, Jayasi, Bulleh Shah, Waris Shah, Shah Latif—can we divide this whole lot of poets between yours and ours? No doubt we divided the territory—but tradition, art, literature are not like geographical areas: they continue to remain undivided, indivisible. (Sobti, "Interview" 51)

Sawhney's reading of Heer Ranjha is a similar one, as his sleeve notes indicate: "The story of forbidden love is as pertinent to a country divided by racial, religious and sexual politics as ever"—though one is left wondering—*which country*? This recuperative and open-ended message enables us, in fact, to read the remaining pieces of *Migration* as part of a more ambitious agenda. Old contiguities between the Punjab and the larger Islamic world are foregrounded by juxtaposing an Arabic love song by Natasha Atlas ("Hope") with *Bahaar* (*Spring*) that layers Turkish singer Denise Anyogu's wordless vocals with a recitation of an Urdu Ghazal. Sawhney thereby evokes cultural hinterlands that radiate out of South Asia from the ancestral Punjab, hinterlands which, thanks to the interventions of (geo)politics, today no longer nourish it except, possibly, in its deterritoralised diasporic incarnation. In the words of one analyst of British Bhangra:

> At the moment of technical wizardry and musical innovation, the assignment of musical instruments and sounds into easily defined nation state boundaries is impossible as one sound merges with and becomes the other. (Dudrah 370)

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In the introduction to their seminal work on Bhangra, Sharma, Hutnyk and Sharma observe:

> Perhaps the new Asian dance music can be read as a cultural form that narrates diasporas, dynamically affirming, transforming and mutating both imagined and material linkages. Diaspora then may be considered a site in which music provides opportunities to formulate new alliances beyond national boundaries, rather than only as a fantasy of home affirming "tradition" or "origins." (Sharma, et al. 9)

My argument has tried to go somewhat further than these claims, largely by drawing on while modifying the work of cultural theorists of the Holocaust—such as Marianne Hirsch, Ernst van Alphen and Mieke Bal—in order to illuminate the relationship between diaspora, cultural memory and affect deriving from another, very different trauma. It has read the affirmative and transnational power of diasporic Punjabi musics, including but not merely restricted to Bhangra and post-Bhangra, as in fact undermining narratives of national origin. These musical genres perform and enable a richer, alternative and affective belonging—that of pre-Partition Punjab. Through the South Asian, and specifically Punjabi perspective, and through musical recall, I have attempted to demonstrate that where narrative falters in commemoration and healing, music can perhaps succeed better. The world that the music of the Punjab opens up is a world where all can enter, but the artist whose claims on the Punjab rest on spirit, blood and postmemory is perhaps best equipped to push open the door. In the words of E. B. Kitaj, speaking in a different but ultimately not dissimilar context, "the diasporist artist's pursuit of a homeless logic of *ethnie* may be the core of a more radical art than we can yet imagine" (Kitaj 40).

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